



April 2002

WHAT A JOURNEY!



Mark Drazeski (back row)
Dennis Sylvia, Robert (Yeou-Luen Ni) & David Gonzales (front row)

Together these four men make a productive team to get Division computer programming needs met.

See article on page 2.

Robert has come a long way... (Continued from page 1.)

Submitted by Mark Drazeski, District I, Community Living Development Placement.

Yeou-Luen Ni, also known as Robert, is a 35-year-old gentleman with autism. He was born and raised in the China province of Taiwan and now lives with his sister in Chandler. He has come a long way, but he isn't through.

Robert was diagnosed at two years of age with early infantile autism, characterized by making no eye contact, having no meaningful language and making no attachments. At that time in Taiwan there was no special education or formal support for Robert. His mother gave up a lucrative career and decided to learn basic behavior management techniques devoting herself to her son. As a pioneering advocate and a tireless teacher, she worked closely with doctors and educators to keep a team intact for Robert, helping him reach past his disability. He was schooled in inclusive classrooms. His scholastic interests and aptitudes were in manipulating numbers, making his excellent memory an asset.

Robert passed the very competitive college entrance exams and entered Tunghai University. In 1991 Robert became the first individual with autism in Taiwan to graduate from the university. He graduated in the top 20% of his class.

His family learned of and explored resources, opportunities and techniques in America for individuals with autism. One program that interested them was the special education research program at Arizona State University. They felt this might be a venue for Robert to further his education in math, engineering and computer sciences. When Robert was awarded a scholarship to study abroad from the Taiwan Ministry of Education in July of 1995, he came to Arizona. His first big challenge was to learn English. A daunting task for someone without any disability, but Robert now converses well enough that working through the University's program he has achieved a 3.30 grade point average (GPA) while working on his Master's Degree in Computer Science.

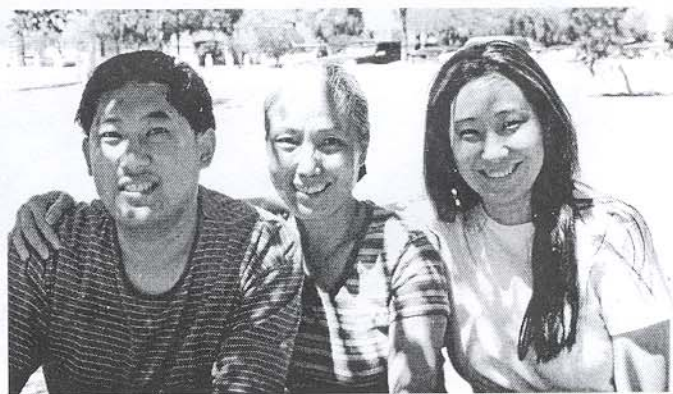
The Division became aware in December 2001 of Robert's need to expand his social and community inclusion. Though a capable student with good

credentials and comfortable communication with his family, Robert lacked the social skills to ease the trepidation of prospective employees. They saw the characteristics of autism and not a trained computer programmer. Division Intake Supervisor Barbara Croom consulted with Mark Drazeski from Community Living Development Placement. In conjunction with Robert and his support team, getting Robert a job became a primary goal. Job searches let to dead ends until David Gonzales, the Division's Application Development Manager heard of Robert. David had no open job positions, but did offer Robert a chance to work as a volunteer in David's office programming and doing quality control analysis.

Robert's employment has been a real boost to his self-esteem and quality of life. He attends work faithfully, takes pride in his work and does library research to learn computer language systems. The interaction with his co-workers has given Robert good opportunities for mentoring and for dealing with the sometimes fast paced staff meetings. His co-workers and family are impressed with his social growth and adaptation to new environments.

His sister Yo-Yi lives with Robert supporting him with direction and structure in life outside work. Autism is something Robert will always have to deal with. Yo-Yi reports Robert has gained self-esteem and the happiness that comes from feeling like a contributing member in the community. This far outweighs any struggles Robert has had on his journey.

Go Robert!



Robert with his mother, Jung-Hsien Ku and sister, Yo-Yi enjoy the company picnic.

ART CONTEST

GRAND PRIZE \$10,000

Expressing Freedom – Call for Entries

This art contest is open for young artists from 16 –25 years living in the United States who have a physical, cognitive or mental disability. Entries should illustrate some aspect of “Expressing Freedom” as it relates to the artist. Eligible media can include paintings and drawings (oil, watercolor, acrylic, pencil or charcoal), fine art prints (lithographs, etching, intaglio, or woodcuts), photography and two-dimensional mixed media. Entry deadline must be postmarked by June 15. For more information call 800-933-8721 extension 3877, email voa@vsarts.org or visit website www.vsarts.org/gallery/callsforart/vw/index/



BABY SHOTS - CONFERENCE

A HEALTHY DOSE OF LOVE

The Arizona Department of Health Services, Immunization Program Office co-sponsors the 9th Annual Immunization Conference featuring William L. Atkinson, M.D., M.P.H., Medical Epidemiologist, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The conference will be held October 31 – November 1 at the Black Canyon Conference Center, 9440 N. 25th Ave, Phoenix. Conference details will be available on website www.hs.state.az.us/phs/immun. Call 602-230-5852 or email Andrea Love at Alove@hs.state.az.us for more information.



VOTER REGISTRATION

The Division in compliance with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) has voter registration forms available at local Division offices. Voter registration is required for voting in both federal and state elections. Once you register it is permanent and re-registration is necessary only if you change your name, address or party affiliation. Support coordinators can assist persons with completing the form and with finding answers to general questions regarding registration and voting. Call toll free at 877-THE-VOTE (1-877-843-8683) for more information on registration qualifications, polling places and early voting.



Upcoming Election and Registration Dates

Primary Election will be held September 10. Registration closes at midnight on August 12 for the Primary Election.

General Election will be held November 5. Registration closes at midnight on October 7 for the General Election.

THE ARIZONA COALITION FOR FAMILY SUPPORT, SELF-DETERMINATION AND
DISABILITY PRESENTS...



HIGH HOPES, HIGH EXPECTATIONS: FROM PHILOSOPHY TO PUBLIC POLICY

*Persons with Disabilities
and Family Members
this conference is for you !!!*

When: August 2 -3, 2002

Where: Phoenix Airport Marriott

Please invite service providers, administrators and policymakers who play a role in your life.
Additional forms and information will be included with your registration materials.

This conference is an opportunity for you to:

- ❖ Get information about state and national family support and self-determination issues, current policies, and projects
- ❖ Speak out about ways to improve your life

Featuring two national speakers:

- ❖ Colleen Wieck, founder of the national Partners in Policymaking Program
- ❖ Michael Wehmeyer, a nationally recognized expert in self-determination

Learn more about

Family Support
Self-Determination
Transition
Assistive Technology
Guardianship
Ticket to Work
Participant Driven Supports
Student led IEPs

Registration materials will be mailed on May 15th

The conference registration fee is \$80.00; the hotel rate is \$78.00. Reduced registration fees and hotel rooms may be available for persons with disabilities and family members.

For more information contact: Virginia Dean (928-523-8116) Virginia.Dean@nau.edu or
Diane Lenz (928-523-7040) Diane.Lenz@nau.edu

For more information on Coalition activities and the upcoming conference, please visit
website http://www.nau.edu/ihd/family_support

Conference Co-Sponsors

Northern Arizona University/Institute for Human Development, Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities,
Arizona Department of Education, Arizona Technology Access Program, Arizona Department of Economic
Security - Division of Developmental Disabilities, Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation
Services, Raising Special Kids, Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona



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Client Self-Sufficiency